

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, August 23. 1711.

I Applaud the Opinion of the Author of the *Spectator*, in the Affair of the *Czar of Muscovy*, as to his leaving his Empire to store his Mind with Useful Knowledge, &c. And I need add nothing to what has been said on that Account; but I cannot equally applaud the *Czar* as a true Hero, unless I could find him sensible of the Native Right of his Subjects, to that Liberty, which God at first, without doubt, vested all his reasonable Creatures with; and which they only lose the Sense of, just as they gradually degenerate from the Rectitude of their Creation.

Had the *Czar of Mosco* a Spirit of true

Greatness, to reject and condemn the British and truly Contemptible part of a Monarch, viz. Tyrannizing over his People; had he deny'd himself this, and restor'd Liberty to his People, made them Masters of their own Property, and sent'd that Property with Laws, against the future Oppressions of his Successors; had he inspir'd them with a Spirit of Liberty, and then cast off the Reins of Oppression himself, setting the People entirely free——Then had he been a Hero indeed——Nor do I see how a Tyrant can be a Hero; nothing but generous Principles constitute a Hero, and a Tyrant can never be Master of those Great
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and Gallant Things, which a generous denying ones self the unjust Use of a Lawless Power, inspires the Mind with.

By setting the People entirely free, I must not be understood to mean a Freedom from Government, but I mean a just Freedom from the Exorbitance of Lawless Arbitrary Governours; those Gods of the Earth, who think they are above the Restraint of Law, and who fancy, because in the Legal Exercise of just Government they must not be Resisted, therefore they must not be Withstood in the Unjust Exercise of Arbitrary Power, and the Invasion of Establish'd Right — This is the Freedom I mean, and no other; had the *Czar of Muscovy* generously laid down, and rejected the Unjust and Arbitrary Exercise of the Despotic Government of the *Russian Emperors*, his cruel and terrible Ancestors, and made his Subjects Free, like Men, not abject Slaves, like their Forefathers; then he had been a Glorious Prince, a Hero in the true abstracted Sense.

But let any Man that has Travelled into those Countries, give us an Account, but how he Reigns, how Absolutely he Commands, as a Man may say, the very Souls and Bodies of his Subjects; how they breath but by his Permission, and his Breath is Life or Death to them, as he pleases: Let them tell us how they cover their Faces at his Presence, and look down on the Earth, (a Token of abject, contemptible Baseness of Soul) not daring to look upon their Monarch — How they Reverence God and their great Duke upon the Square, and speak of them as Equals: How he lays their Nobles and Princes on the Ground at his Pleasure, and causes them to be Corrupted by the Executioner: How he binds the Sons of his Nobility and Gentry Apprentices to Artificers and Handicrafts-Men, and causes them to labour at his Command like Mechanicks: How he Commands his People to the War, and makes the best Subjects he has, serve in his Armies, and a Thousand like Specimens of Absolute Government; I say, let any Man that has Travelled that Country, give us the Histories

of these Particulars; I doubt not, but the most passively Subjected Non-Resistance-Man in this Nation, would bless the Ground he treads on, to think that it lies under the happy Region of a Legal and Limited Government.

When I think of the Absolute Subjection, and the abject, sordid, subjected Souls of these Creatures, which in those Countries are called Men, for here they would not deserve that Name, it made Way for this just Resistance.

The happiness of Free Nations does not consist merely and abstractly in the Liberties and Privileges they enjoy, but in the Sense they have of the Excellency and Use of those Privileges, and the Taste they have of Liberty itself. As Light to a Man who has lost his Eyes, Music to the Deaf, and Saucers to the Tasteless Palate, so is Liberty to the Wretch that understands not the Use of it — And this makes me Wonderless at the eagerness which some People among us Argue for the Tyrannical Arbitrary Government of their Prince, wishing to be Govern'd by an unrestrain'd Tyrant; the Reason is most plain, they have no Relish, no Taste of Liberty.

Hence a Non-Resisting Tory is one of the most unaccountable Wretches in Nature — He enjoys Liberty as we do — For he is a Subject in common with us all, but he has no Relish of it, no Taste of it; he is for throwing it away, and giving it up every Hour; yet he belyes himself when he says so too, for take but that Liberty from him, he lies in your Face presently, he cannot live without it, tho' he does not understand it when he has it — If ever he knows what Liberty is, it is when he loses it; yet set him free at any Time, he knows as little how to value or use that Liberty, as he did to bear his Bondage; Strange Creatures these are indeed! that cannot live but in Slavery, and yet are Free; that when they are Free know not how to value it, have no Taste of the Liberty they enjoy, no Gust for it, and ever struggling to lose it.

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I have heard indeed of Slaves that would not go Free when they might; The Divine Institution of God in the *Hebrew Law*, put a Mark upon such as these, viz. That *their Ears should be bored shew to the Posts of the Door*; and might all our Friends here, that are for giving up to the Arbitrary Will of a Tyrant, *have their Ears bored shew*, I think we should find few of them stand to the Operation; for what was the Consequence? The Man was a Servant from that Day as long as he lived, and so indeed they that love Bondage should be.

I have heard of a Planter in *Barbadoes*, that being fill'd with Compassion for the Miseries of his poor *Negro Slaves*, and having a strong Regret upon his Mind at Oppressing Human Nature and his Fellow Creatures, call'd all the *Negroes* of his Plantation together, who were bought with his Money, and cost him several Hundred Pounds, and told them they were all made by the same Power; That they had all Souls of equal and estimable Value; That they were all, by Nature, alike Free with him and others; That they had a Right to Liberty as well as he, and that he could not bear to oppress his fellow Creatures in such a manner, and that therefore he was resolv'd to do them Justice, and make them all Free, and so bad them go whither they pleas'd.

The poor Wretches were at first overjoy'd at their Liberty, but having no View of the Advantages of it, no Taste of the Pleasure of it, and not knowing what to do, they went about to get Employ for Wages; when they had earn'd it, they knew not what to do with the Money — They were quite out of their Element, and away they went to their Old Master, and desired him to take them again, and set them to Work.

Liberty is a Jewel, which like the Diamond, lies rough in the Earth, it is of no Value but to them that understand it, and know what to do with it. Liberty to a Man that understands it not, is like a Ship full of Gold and Silver, but no Provisions in it; the Seamen will all be starv'd: The V-

lue of Liberty is in the Use of it; he that knows not how to use it, has no Taste for it, no Relish of it, and 'tis of no Value to him, he cannot live upon it.

In the Days of Old *Farrington*, Marshal of the King's Bench, there was an Old Man had been Prisoner in the House 18 Years — The Marshal sends for him one Day — *Frank*, says he, *Thou hast serv'd a long Apprenticeship here, and thy Creditors, I think, are all Dead, thou liest here only for thy Fees, I could almost find in my Heart to let thee go* — How sayest thou to that? O God bless you, Master, says *Frank*, I shall be bound to pray for you, and down he falls upon his Knees, and makes abundance of extraordinary Entreaties for his Liberty, and accordingly Mr. *Farrington* let him out.

The poor man was so Naturaliz'd to the Place, that he car'd not to be far from it, and getting together a little Money, he sets up an Apple-Stall just at the Prison Door — Thus he liv'd for a while, tho' like a Fish out of Water; and finding his little Stock wast and grow low, away he comes to the Turn-Key one Morning, What a Pox does Mr. *Farrington* mean, says he, does he think I can live here with selling Apples and Nuts? Pray tell him I desire to come into the House again.

The Man had no Taste of Liberty, he knew not how to live; and the Liberty he enjoy'd was a Load on his Back. The Application of the whole is this; That Liberty to People that do not understand it, is of no Value, and that's the Reason some People throw their Privileges and Properties away, and choose to be Slaves when they may go free; perhaps our Northern Nation do so. But this would make the *Muscovite* a true Hero, viz. That he would, with the other Improvements, instruct his People in the Use, the Value, the Advantage of Liberty, that they may love and desire it, and then give it to them, of which hereafter.

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